

Ashfield Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112147
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	310798
Inspection dates	4–5 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Dave Byrne

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	244
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Barry Stephenson
Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Ditchburn
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2003
School address	High Street Workington Cumbria CA14 4ES
Telephone number	01900 325256
Fax number	01900 872786

Age group	7–11
Inspection dates	4–5 October 2007
Inspection number	310798

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a junior school with a facility for pupils with a statement of special educational need. The large majority of pupils are of White British background and none requires support for English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is above the national average although the overall proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The percentage of pupils taking free school meals is below average. Standards are above average when pupils start school in Year 3. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post for two terms.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. The majority of parents are pleased with it and quite rightly feel that it is very caring and provides very good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Inspection evidence confirms the school's own view that current achievement is satisfactory.

Pupils start school with standards that are above average. They make satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 6 standards are above average overall. There are strengths in science but standards in mathematics could be better. Teaching and learning are satisfactory; teachers create positive relationships in their classrooms but the challenge for pupils is not always high enough. As a result, not all pupils achieve as well as they can, most noticeably the more able pupils. Good teaching and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities mean that these pupils make good progress.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Whilst behaviour is good in lessons and pupils say that they feel safe, a small minority lack self-control in and around school. Pupils develop a good knowledge and understanding of how to live safe and healthy lives and are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage in their education. Staff are very supportive of pupils with personal or emotional difficulties, but guidance to support pupils' academic progress is relatively weak. Procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress do not identify accurately enough those pupils who are doing well and those needing additional support.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is enriched by a good range of educational visits, including residential experiences. All subjects are taught in accordance with requirements but some planning of work lacks flair, imagination and challenge. This reduces the excitement of learning and, consequently, some pupils lack motivation.

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory. The headteacher, supported by an effective deputy headteacher, is bringing about essential improvements. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and contributes to identifying priorities for improving the school. However, not all senior staff contribute fully to processes that lead to school improvement such as monitoring its work and setting challenging targets for pupils. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics and improve the achievement of more able pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum to provide greater challenge and excitement for all pupils.
- Increase the roles of senior staff in improving the school through monitoring its work more closely and setting more challenging targets for pupils' progress.
- Track pupils' progress more accurately and identify which pupils need extra support or challenge.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average. Given the above average standards with which pupils start school, their achievement is satisfactory. The 2006 national test results in science were well above the national average and results in English were above average. In mathematics, results were broadly average. The 2007 results show a similar picture to the previous year as does the work seen during the inspection. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well in relation to their individual targets. Higher attaining pupils however could do better. The level of challenge provided across the school does not extend their existing knowledge and understanding enough. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls. Where there have been differences, for example, in girls doing better than boys in writing, the gap has been narrowed and is currently not significant.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Most pupils are keen to learn and report that they enjoy school. Attendance levels are in line with the national average. Overall behaviour is satisfactory and it is often good in lessons. A small minority of pupils are struggling to meet the higher expectations of behaviour in and around school. Pupils are confident that any poor behaviour will be dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The school council gives pupils a voice. Some of their ideas have been taken up, like the daily organisation of a fruit 'tuck shop'. Pupils know about healthy food and make sensible choices. Most take every chance the school offers to exercise. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning are sometimes subdued by the lack of excitement in lessons and limited opportunities to use their initiative. Whilst basic skills are strong, progress is inhibited for higher attaining pupils who are not always challenged enough in their learning. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. On occasions they are good. Work in lessons meets most pupils' needs, although there are some lessons when the more able pupils are not fully challenged. Very effective support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities by skilled teaching assistants. Consequently, these pupils are very well included in all aspects of school life and make good progress. Whilst teachers have secure subject knowledge, lesson activities sometimes lack flair and stimulation. Where activities are imaginative and challenging, pupils respond with great enthusiasm. For example, pupils enjoyed creating instructions for the Tudor game linked to a visit to Rufford Hall. Pupils responded well to the challenge posed by an adult in the role of a 'film director' who sought their views of a Sherlock Holmes story. Too often, though, lessons are mundane. Opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) to enliven lessons are rarely taken. Too often pupils are expected to listen rather than think and make decisions for themselves. Teachers talk to pupils about their work, helping them to know what they must do to improve. Occasionally, their marking does not give enough guidance on how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that meets statutory requirements. The school acknowledges that it needs to do more to plan and present an exciting and stimulating curriculum to challenge the learning of all pupils, particularly the most able. Well planned programmes of support ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Planning for literacy, numeracy and ICT is satisfactory and pupils acquire adequate skills in preparation for the next stage in their education. A strength of the curriculum is the range of extra-curricular clubs and activities available to all pupils. These include sports, art and music clubs, and pupils are keen to attend. Pupils in all age groups have the opportunity to take part in exciting residential visits which, along with interesting visitors, enrich the curriculum well. There is a good partnership with local high schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

All pupils are well cared for and this helps them feel safe and happy in school. Procedures for safeguarding the pupils are rigorous. Many parents praise the headteacher for his friendliness and approachability. Staff know the pupils and their families well and offer them individual pastoral support. Vulnerable pupils and their parents are supported appropriately. The headteacher is developing an ethos that promotes a 'can do' culture which serves the pupils well now and in later life. Parents feel they have appropriate information about their children's progress. The school acknowledges the need to improve the assessment process so that it identifies those pupils that need extra support and challenge more accurately. Teachers discuss with pupils how they can improve their work. Occasionally, marking is not helpful enough to pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively supported and their parents kept informed of their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school's future which is based upon an accurate analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher are successfully introducing improvements which are beginning to raise expectations of pupils. Crucial elements of performance management are being introduced so that the roles of all staff are clearly defined. School improvement planning procedures have been updated. The roles of senior staff are currently under review. Some key leaders are inexperienced in crucial areas of management and are not making enough contribution to the management of school improvement. This is particularly evident in their involvement in monitoring teaching and learning and in using assessment data to set challenging targets for pupils. As a result, the targets for the performance of more able pupils lack ambition.

Governance is satisfactory in ensuring that statutory requirements are met but the governors' role in monitoring the school's performance is underdeveloped. The school has made adequate improvement since the last inspection and has a satisfactory capacity to improve in future.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

5 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashfield Junior School, Cumbria, CA14 4ES

Our recent visit to your school was most enjoyable. Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming to us both.

We agree with you that the school is a safe and caring place and we are pleased you feel that your views are being listened to. Most of the time you behave well, but at times some of you could be more considerate of others.

During lessons you listen quietly, but you could get more involved in your lessons. Those of you who find learning difficult get good support but those of you who find work easy could do more. This would help you to reach better standards and make more progress, especially in mathematics. We have asked your school to find ways of doing this. It was good to discover how much you like the trips and visits you go on. These help you to understand some of your class work. We noticed, however, that at times your lessons could be more exciting which would make learning even more fun.

Your school is a very caring one. It is getting better all the time and everyone works well together as a team. In order to improve more, we think the school should:

- raise standards in mathematics and improve the achievement of more able pupils
- improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum to provide greater challenge and excitement
- involve senior staff more in improving the school by monitoring its work more closely and setting more challenging targets for you
- track your progress more accurately and identify those pupils who need extra support or challenge.

I am sure you will work with your teachers to make the school even better and will have many ideas of your own too.

We wish all the very best wishes to you for your future success and happiness.

Yours sincerely

Dave Byrne and Michael Onyon

Your school inspectors